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ABSTRACT

Freshmen at a large suburban high school were given a questionnaire about their attitudes toward tracking or ability grouping. From the 867 students, 50 were randomly selected from each of four levels in the tracking system: honor algebra, regular algebra, fundamentals of algebra, and general mathematics. The majority of students at each level were pleased with their level of placement. Percentage of responses for the ten questions are reported by track level and sex. (MS)

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STUDENT'S ATTITUDES TOWARD TRACKING

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Abstract

Freshmen students, at a large suburban high school were given a questionnaire about their attitudes toward tracking in the mathematics classes. The freshmen students of this high school seemed to be very pleased with their placement in all levels. The most significant factors were that their placement was correct for them and that they could do their best at that particulare level. Thirty-two percent of the honor students stated that they would be happier at a lower level.

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STUDENT'S ATTITUDES TOWARD TRACKING

Ability grouping in the form of a track system has been in the secondary schools for generations. It has been and still is a widely acceptable practice among most medium sized or larger secondary schools. In 1968 the National Education Association Researchers found that 87.3 percent of the secondary teachers surveyed were in favor of ability grouping. Administrators and boards of education were also found to be in favor of ability grouping. (1:88) The most important part of the population in this survey was omitted---students. What are some of the attitudes they have toward tracking? Are they content or frustrated in this system? Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain some insights into freshmen students' attitudes toward the track system at the various levels in mathematics.

Research Report

To determine the attitude of selected high school students toward their own placement in mathematics, the researcher conducted the following study.

Subjects This questionnaire was administered in one public high school located in a large metropolitan area. This school was located in a white, middle-class suburb. The enrollment was approximately three thousand one hundred students; eight hundred sixty seven were freshmen. The sample consisted of two hundred high school freshmen who were

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randomly chosen from four levels in the mathematics track system; fifty honor algebra students, fifty regular algebra students, fifty fundamentals of algebra students, and fifty general mathematics students. Criteria for placement into each of these levels had been based on the following: (a) intelligence quotient, (b) reading score, (c) mathematics achievement in concepts and application, and (d) teacher recommendation. These scores were compiled by each feeder school. The high school faculty members evaluated the data and made the placement recommendations.

The method used to obtain the sample of two hundred students was by the table of random numbers. All freshmen mathematics students were given the questionnaire. Each student in each track was assigned a number. By using the random number table fifty students in each track were obtained for the sample.

Instrumentation The enclosed questionnaire to survey student's attitude toward the tracking system was administrerd. This questionnaire was investigator initiated. Each instructor who administered the questionnaire was asked not to influence the students. They were only allowed to define words which were unfamiliar to their students.

Statistical Treatment The raw data was expressed into an equivalent form, percentage. These percentages were separated into two parts:total percent of the rating per question and total male and female percent of the rating per question. The following were the results according toeach question. The rate on each question was according to the

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questionnaire: 1 strongly disagree, 2 moderately disagree, 3 no opinion, 4 moderately agree, and 5 strongly agree.

FRESHMAN QUESTIONNAIRE

MATHEMATICS

LEVEL:Please, circle one of the following:

Honors Algebra Algebra Fundamentals of Algebra General Math

Is this the level originally assigned to you: yes no

Please, number each item according to the following five point scale.

L strongly disagree, 2 moderately disagree, 3 no opinion, 4 moderately agree 5 strongly agree

___1. I am very pleased with my level of placement in mathematics.

___2. I feel that my level of placement is appropriate for me.

___3. I can do my best in the level I am in.

___4. I would be happier in a different level of freshman mathematics.

___5. I complain to my friends about the course level.

___6. I sometimes complain to my parents about the course level.

___7. I would be happier in a higher level of mathematics.

___8. I could get better grades in a higher level of mathematics.

___9. I feel it is prestigious to be placed in an honors class.

__10. I feel that I am challenged in my present level.

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Track 1 was the honor algeb ra students; track number 2 was the regular algebra students; track number 3 was the fundamentals of algebra students; and track number 4 was the general mathematics students.

The summary of total percentage of males and tatal percentage of females and the total for the entire group in each track and how they answered the questions follow.

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TOTAL PERCENT OF

STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD TRACKING

Question 1: I am very pleased with my level of placement in mathematics.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	0%	2%	8%	26%	10%
Female	6%	8%	2%	24%	14%
Total	6%	10%	10%	50%	24%
Track 2:					
Male	4%	8%	4%	10%	14%
Female	8%	10%	8%	18%	16%
Total	12%	18%	12%	28%	30%
Track 3:					
Male	6%	8%	8%	18%	14%
Female	2%	2%	2%	32%	8%
Total	8%	10%	10%	50%	22%
Track 4:					
Male	14%	2%	14%	24%	20%
Female	6%	2%	10%	4%	4%
Total	20%	4%	24%	28%	24%

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Question 2: I feel that my level of placement is appropriate for me.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	0%	4%	8%	20%	14%
Female	6%	10%	6%	22%	10%
Total	6%	14%	14%	42%	24%
Track 2:					
Male	6%	6%	2%	12%	14%
Female	6%	8%	8%	20%	18%
Total	12%	14%	10%	32%	32%
Track 3:					
Male	4%	6%	4%	16%	22%
Female	6%	4%	0%	22%	16%
Total	10%	10%	4%	38%	38%
Track 4:					
Male	10%	8%	18%	18%	20%
Female	4%	4%	2%	10%	6%
Total	14%	12%	20%	28%	26%

Question 3: I can do my best in the level I am in.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	2%	6%	8%	16%	14%
Female	6%	12%	10%	12%	14%
Total	8%	18%	18%	28%	28%
Track 2:					
Male	10%	4%	4%	8%	14%
Female	0%	14%	10%	18%	18%
Total	10%	28%	14%	26%	32%
Track 3:					
Male	6%	8%	10%	10%	18%
Female	4%	6%	0%	18%	20%
Total	10%	14%	10%	28%	38%
Track 4:					
Male	10%	6%	12%	22%	24%
Female	0%	2%	4%	10%	10%
Total	10%	8%	16%	32%	34%

Question 4: I would be happier in a different level of freshmen mathematics.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	12%	14%	8%	8%	4%
Female	14%	14%	6%	16%	4%
Total	26%	28%	14%	24%	8%

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Track 2:					
Male	18%	6%	2%	2%	12%
Female	30%	12%	6%	2%	10%
Total	48%	18%	8%	4%	22%
Track 3:					
Male	22%	4%	12%	4%	10%
Female	20%	18%	6%	2%	2%
Total	42%	22%	18%	6%	12%
Track 4:					
Male	30%	12%	12%	8%	12%
Female	14%	4%	2%	0%	6%
Total	44%	16%	14%	8%	18%

Question 5: I complain to my friends about the course level.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	16%	10%	12%	8%	0%
Female	14%	10%	10%	12%	8%
Total	30%	20%	22%	20%	8%
Track 2:					
Male	20%	6%	4%	2%	8%
Female	18%	8%	12%	14%	8%
Total	38%	14%	16%	16%	16%
Track 3:					
Male	22%	10%	10%	8%	2%
Female	24%	12%	6%	4%	2%
Total	46%	22%	16%	12%	4%
Track 4:					
Male	30%	14%	10%	8%	12%
Female	4%	6%	10%	4%	2%
Total	34%	20%	20%	12%	14%

Question 6: I sometimes complain to my parents about the course level.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	10%	6%	8%	20%	2%
Female	8%	16%	0%	22%	8%
Total	18%	22%	8%	42%	10%
Track 2:					
Male	24%	4%	0%	4%	8%
Female	20%	6%	8%	16%	10%
Total	44%	10%	8%	20%	18%
Track 3:					
Male	16%	14%	12%	8%	2%
Female	30%	12%	2%	0%	4%
Total	46%	26%	14%	8%	6%
Track 4:					
Male	44%	12%	12%	2%	4%
Female	14%	2%	4%	4%	2%
Total	58%	14%	16%	6%	6%

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Question 7: I would be happier in a higher level of mathematics.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male					
Female	DOES NOT APPLY				
Total					
Track 2:					
Male	30%	49%	2%	2%	2%
Female	58%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Total	88%	49%	4%	2%	2%
Track 3:					
Male	36%	8%	2%	0%	6%
Female	24%	8%	8%	6%	2%
Total	60%	16%	10%	6%	8%
Track 4:					
Male	48%	12%	4%	2%	8%
Female	16%	4%	4%	0%	2%
Total	64%	16%	8%	2%	10%

Question 8: I could get better grades in a higher level of mathematics.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male					
Female	DOES NOT APPLY				
Total					
Track 2:					
Male	32%	2%	4%	0%	2%
Female	54%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Total	86%	8%	4%	0%	2%
Track 3:					
Male	36%	2%	8%	4%	2%
Female	28%	10%	6%	4%	0%
Total	64%	12%	14%	8%	2%
Track 4:					
Male	46%	10%	10%	4%	4%
Female	18%	2%	4%	2%	0%
Total	64%	12%	14%	6%	4%

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Question 9: I feel it is prestigious to be placed in an honors class.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	2%	4%	6%	22%	12%
Female	4%	6%	12%	18%	14%
Total	6%	10%	18%	40%	26%
Track 2:					
Male	8%	6%	20%	4%	2%
Female	30%	8%	14%	4%	4%
Total	38%	14%	34%	8%	6%
Track 3:					
Male	22%	8%	12%	2%	8%
Female	16%	12%	16%	2%	2%
Total	38%	20%	28%	4%	10%
Track 4:					
Male	24%	6%	34%	4%	6%
Female	10%	0%	8%	4%	4%
Total	34%	6%	42%	8%	10%

Question 10: I feel that I am challenged in my present level.

Response:	1	2	3	4	5
Track 1:					
Male	0%	2%	0%	14%	30%
Female	2%	2%	6%	12%	32%
Total	2%	4%	6%	26%	62%
Track 2:					
Male	6%	4%	6%	16%	8%
Female	6%	4%	10%	20%	20%
Total	12%	8%	16%	36%	28%
Track 3:					
Male	12%	4%	14%	8%	14%
Female	12%	4%	16%	4%	2%
Total	24%	8%	30%	12%	16%
Track 4:					
Male	14%	6%	16%	24%	14%
Female	8%	2%	8%	0%	8%
Total	22%	8%	24%	24%	22%

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Summary of Data

The freshmen students of this high school seemed to be very pleased with their placement in all levels. The most significant factors were that their placement was correct for them and that they could do their best at that particular level. Whether they would be happier at a different level was a factor to the students in the honors track. Thirty-two percent stated they would be happier in a lower track. This factor could be substantiated due to the amount of content material covered and the pace required. The demands of this track were great.

The amount of complaining done by students about the track system seemed to diminish respectively with thetracks. Students in thehonors track complained the most to their parents but not to their peers. These students, regardless of complaints, felt it was prestigious to be placed in this level. The remaining track students did not feel this way. Therefore, it could be concluded that the students in these tracks were content and not frustrated in the system. The track system also provided a challenge at all levels. Males especially were challenged in the lower tracks. Generally there was no difference in the responses of the males and the females.

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